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ABSTRACT

A team-oriented approach is replacing the traditional management style in today's organizations. Because team management skills differ, they require different teaching methods. This paper describes an administrator education course designed to develop team management skills from an applied and behavioral viewpoint. Students participate in organizational teams who deal with real problems. Information on the course design, instructor guidelines, and group sessions is provided. Outcomes of the group experience include group cohesiveness and trust. The appendix contains a description of course requirements. (Contains 29 references.) (LMI)

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TEAMS

Team Exercise for Action Management Skills

A Semester-long Team-management Simulation

A Paper

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Exploring Teaching Alternatives

and

The Network for Cooperative Learning in

Higher Education

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San Pedro (Los Angeles) California

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Abstract

Team-management has become the new philosophy for leaders in today's organizations. This has occurred in order to maximize organizational survival opportunities in a rapidly changing business environment. This "Darwinian" survival of the fittest attitude has driven firms to seek a team-management philosophy rather than a traditional top-down management philosophy because the problems are too complex for individuals to solve alone. Companies are discovering a well functioning team consistently out performs a talented individual because the combined action of members working together increases each other's effectiveness and creates synergy.

Increasingly the old authoritative management style is giving way to a team oriented approach. The old style created an "Us against them" attitude between management and workers, with its emphasis on individual performance and rewards, while the new style is moving toward cooperation in an effort to develop the proper chemistry for winning in the international market.

The purpose of this paper / workshop is to suggest that this evolution has had a profound effect on the skills necessary to lead today's organizations toward competitive advantage. As a result of this change in management philosophy, changes in management education, including content and pedagogy, are suggested and explored. The skills necessary to lead a team-management organization are different than the skills necessary to lead a traditional top-down management organization. Likewise the methods for teaching the skills are necessarily different.

Traditional management required leaders to be the expert, be directive, give advice, be independent, and make decisions where team-management requires leaders to facilitate, support, counsel, empower, consult, cooperate and nurture. Additionally, team-management leaders need a keen understanding of the stages of group development. The position of this author is that the new skills of team-management are best taught in an experiential setting. This pedagogy provides students with a laboratory for acquiring and honing new team-management leadership skills in an applied atmosphere of team development.

Introduction

The overall objective of the semester long TEAMS simulation is not to simulate an organization, but rather to create genuine organizational teams that force students to deal with real problems. Members must grapple with leadership, conflict, influence, motivation, and ambiguity in an attempt to manage their own teams- and their own education. Members working together as a group go through slow and sometimes painful stages of development in their quest to be a successful team. These group development stages are: forming; storming; norming; performing; and adjourning (Tuckman and Jensen,1977; Corey and Corey, 1987).

At each stage of development, two issues about group behavior are addressed- task and process (Gordon, 1987). Task is the steps of performing the activity. Process is the interpersonal dynamics needed to perform the task. Good group decision-making is a dynamic exchange, of bargaining and compromise, between process and task. This is group dynamics, as the individual and the group collectively explore and experience each other and the task.

The pedagogy of using experiential exercises and the "Classroom as an Organization" (Cohen et al., 1976) "Group-on-Group" design (Pfeiffer and Jones, 1972-1980; Porter, 1978; Van Steenberg and Gillette, 1985) facilitates the opportunity for students to

experiment with applying theory to actual situations thus developing their own leadership style. In addition, this classroom method allows the instructor to role model a facilitative leadership style. The instructor becomes a coach and consultant empowering students to explore their attitudes about teamwork and leadership, rather than a traditional technical expert with knowledge, direction, and advice. The latter may lead to the deskilling of students and passivity, putting the burden of education on the instructor (Gemmill, 1988). Students come to expect the instructor to provide both the frame work and the information to solve their problems. In the method presented, students learn team-management problem solving skills to frame and solve their own problems.

Course Overview and Objectives

This course is designed to develop and enhance team management leadership skills from an applied and behavioral point of view. Students will develop:

* An awareness and understanding of teams and team development stages.
* An awareness of the interpersonal and group dynamics that are embedded in teams.
* Learn and improve team leadership skills.
* Learn and improve team management problem solving skills.
* Consultation skills for making group interventions.

The classroom should be a safe haven for experimentation and cultivation of ideas. Consequently the student has an opportunity to assess and develop his/her leadership skills in a non-threatening environment. Because the learning methods should relate to the specific learning task (Singer, 1975) the methods used in this class are different from the typical (text, lecture, test) style found it most undergraduates curriculums. Students are exposed to simulations, structured exercises, role play, pro-style seminars, team-work, triads, process consultation, case studies, films and journal writing. These alternative learning methods may cause the student some stress and anxiety as s/he struggles with group dynamics, a lack of experience in dealing with groups, an educational system that places an emphasis on individual achievement, a preference for working alone, and a preference for passive learning (Mezoff, 1978).

Course Design

The class is structured as a semester long management simulation designed to allow the students to experience being part of an ongoing team that goes through the stages of group development. This management simulation is an eclectic combination of "Classroom-As-An-Organization" (Cohen, 1976); "Twin Corp" an extension of Classroom-As-Organization (Barry, 1990); "Consulting Teams" (Tubbs, 1985); "Group-on-Group" (Pfeiffer and Jones, 1972-1980; Porter, 1978; Van Steenberg and Gillette,

1985); Experiential exercises (Pfeiffer & Jones, Annual); Interpersonal and Group Skills for Managers (Gemmill, 1986); and Gestalt Therapy, (Perls, 1969).

The grading is based on the following with equal weight given to each component: a semester long journal; a mid-term case study; class participation (group work and presentation) and a final comprehensive paper. (See appendix) Integrated throughout the semester are various lecturettes on pertinent topics appropriate to the corresponding stage of development for the groups. These are delivered in a pro-style seminar format where students sit in a big circle rather than in rows and columns. This induces students to talk among themselves instead of to the instructor. The topics and exercises are chosen to help facilitate movement through the progressive stages of group development. Topics focus on the theme/s, tasks and processes, objectives and common outcomes of various stages.

Instructor guidelines

The aim of the instructor in teaching a semester long team management simulation is two fold: 1) to role model facilitative leadership by empowering the students to take ownership and responsibility for the course and therefore their own education. This requires consultation, cooperation, and nurturing; 2) to guide them through the stages of group development so they can experience it first hand. Keeping both of these aims in mind,

instructors need to be mindful that the schedule of sessions should be flexible enough to reflect a sensitivity about where the groups are in their development, yet provide thoughtful interventions focused on what they need to work on, to get to another level of group development. The instructor has to, at times, be content to allow the groups to develop at their own pace and not let his / her preoccupation with course content get in the way of students learning to be responsible for their own education.

Sessions (Session = three contact hours)

The Start... Forming

The theme of the first three sessions is on forming the groups by getting acquainted, which is usually accomplished through various forms of introductions. Students are exposed to many ice breaker games to learn each other's names and backgrounds. Much time is spent by the instructor explaining the structure of the class and the expectations of learner performance. Usually games like the survival synergy exercise are played to allow students to explore issues of dependency, team work, and leadership. Members start to explore how much they want to self-disclose to the group, how much they want to get involved, and what kind of structure they want?

Typical occurrences at this stage are suspicion about games introduced by the instructor and complaining or intellectualizing

about the group and the task. Other learners may daydream or story-tell. An example is talking about week-end social plans.

Feedback about influence, knowledge, commitment, and feelings are introduced initially in a non-threatening way by having the members submit their feedback anonymously to the instructor who summarizes the results and gives it to the group. In this way individual members of the group can check their perceptions without fear of retribution. Later in the semester feedback is given openly.

Early on... A storm is brewing

The theme of the next two sessions change as members start to emerge in certain roles and attempt to influence others in the group. This often leads to conflict. Exercises that involve planning, decision making and implementation lead to confrontations, as members struggle with self-control and their influence and standing in the group. An example of an exercise is model building or team drawings.

This movement toward the developmental stage of storming is enhanced because groups must present their exercises and explain the rationale for their output to the rest of the class. This creates intergroup competition as groups give each other feedback and compare their projects and organizations. The anxiety of the working conditions force members to speak out to avoid losing

control of themselves in front of their peers and creates a struggle for control of individual groups and the class as a whole. Leaders and followers start to develop. The groups begin to discuss the need for structure, goals, and strategy. Members start to act more like they do in real life and the group becomes a microcosm for each person's life in the real world.

Typical occurrences during this stage include the emergence of members into various roles, scapegoating of members or the instructor (Gemmill, 1998), rivalries between groups, lots of advice giving, and many arguments. An example voiced by students may be, "If our group wasn't so big it would be easier to work together."

The storm is raging

In approximately the sixth week I introduce them to the following format and it serves as the learning vehicle for group development until about week 12 of the semester. A modified version of "Consulting Teams" (Tubbs, 1984) and "Group-on Group" (Pfeiffer and Jones, 1972-1980; Porter, 1978; Van Steenberg and Gillette, 1985) pedagogy is used that incorporates process consultation (Schein, 1987). Tubbs' use of student teams to work as semester long consultants integrating and / or applying theories of organizational behavior to real companies outside of the classroom was adapted to the classroom. Van Steenberg and Gillette's idea of promoting interpersonal, group, and intergroup

learning by having student groups work in fishbowls with the instructor as the consultant was modified to use student groups as the consultants. The method used for student consulting was adapted from Schein's model, developed for consultants and managers as a organizational development intervention tool. The consultant is viewed as a facilitator with helping knowledge in the group process rather than an expert with technical knowledge. In this way the consultant helps to influence the organization toward achieving objectives.

Groups take turns being a work group, a consulting group, and an observation group. The simulation is two pronged because to understand and work as a consulting group, a group must also be well developed as a work group, and vice versa. The format is a five step process, with multiple events, as follows:

(1) The first twenty minutes is used to discuss old business and/or introduce new topics with a lecturette. This is done as a pro-style seminar.

(2) Students then break into their groups for twenty minute meetings, in separate locations, to discuss the following questions. (1) How do we want to form as a group? (2) How do we want to consult? (3) How do we want to be consulted to? (4) The topic for the evening. Topics include the important issues that need to be addressed in all groups: leadership, authority, roles, responsibility, communication, relationships, trust, etc.

(3) All groups reconvene into the classroom to partake in the "fishbowl" process consulting exercises. A work group is selected in a different order each week to discuss, in the here and now, the topic for the evening.

(A) The focus for the work group is to work on their own group development by talking about the session's topic as it relates to their group's issues and problems. In the first fishbowl sessions structured exercise maybe used to give the work group a focus. The need for this dissipates as groups develop and get more comfortable in both roles. Either role can be an effective tool leading to group development because of the mirroring effect. The organizational mirror's greatest utility is to provide a vehicle for group members to examine the perceptions they have of another group in order to learn more about their own group (Gemmill and Costello, 1989). In this way both groups are involved in each other's learning process. The consulting group's charge is to facilitate the work group's interaction.

(B) The focus for the consulting group is on developing effective management intervention skills. They deal with issues of authority, responsibility and anxiety. They facilitate the same work group all semester, simulating the role of managers. They struggle with what to say, when to say it, how to say it, and whom to say it to? Initially interventions should be role modeled by the instructor. Interventions should take the form of verbal reminders stated to the group as a whole in broad

statements or questions. While members will initially attempt to answer the instructor directly they should be redirected to discuss it with their work group. An example is: "It seems like the group would rather watch two members fight than to work on the task together."

(C) The third group serves as observers. Their charge is to makes notes and give feedback to the consulting group about the following issues: (1) Which interventions were effective? (2) Which interventions were ineffective? (3) What they liked about the session? (4) What difficulties the consultants experienced? (5) Suggestions for improvements in the future. This helps the consulting group clarify the effectiveness of their role and to synthesize their learning thorugh examination of their behavior. Each group spends 20 minutes working in the fishbowl. The observers then open the 5-10 minute discussion session with feedback from their notes. The work group and consulting group are then encouraged to join the session.

(4) The consulting group then meets for a private 5-10 minute session with the instructor to further discuss their process consulting, while the other groups take a break. This same procedure is repeated three times.

(5) The final 30 minutes are spent in triads, group meetings or pro-style seminars processing the events of the session.

Typical occurrences include friction between groups as consultants make mistakes with interventions and the work group

circles the wagons to ward off attacks. Examples include consultants personally attacking an individual member or completely dominating the work group's session. Each group tends to see themselves as an ideal group while viewing the other groups as needing improvement. To personify these misperceptions and get the groups to recognize and discuss development and roles, the GROPE exercise or organizational mirrors is played.

The storm has passed... Norming begins

Later in the semester the theme of conflict slowly and sometimes painfully gives way to a normalizing theme of cohesion and trust. Teams are given the final 30 minutes of the past two weeks to work alone on their end of semester presentations. Help from consulting groups and / or the instructor is only given if asked. Compromise leads to harmony as individuals realize that the blood letting of the previous stage, while somewhat cathartic, was self-defeating for themselves as individuals and for the group as a whole. The groups establish norms and roles that help to guide individual expectations and behaviors.

Typical learner behaviors at this stage include members striving for positive involvement in the group by demonstrating genuine caring and the direction of the group. An example of this is members asking other members how they feel about an issue. Other activities of this stage are a willingness to challenge and

confront others about issue differences rather than personal differences, and a feeling of cohesion based on trust.

Norming

Session 12 consists of individual team meetings with consulting done only at the request of the work group. Meetings are for the purpose of planning the group project and presentation due the next week. The theme is one of honest and open dialogue, while working toward the group task of developing a presentation. At this stage the group has started to develop a level of maturity where individuals have evolved into roles that best suit their talents. Group norms are internalized so that members authorize themselves to be leaders by expressing their true feelings and ideas rather than needing an external cue from a leader. Members are now willing to address conflict for the altruistic reason of exploring alternatives rather than self-serving personal satisfaction.

Occurrences that mark this stage are more honest and clear communication, greater interaction, inclusion and action by all members, lower frustration and fewer arguments, and a high level of trust and cohesion.

Show time... Performing

Session 13 Presentations (See appendix)

Saying good-bye... Adjourning

Session 14 In the adjourning stage the theme of the process component is one of saying good-bye with much anxiety over losing the support and identity that individuals enjoyed as members of a group. The group decides how to separate and how to resolve some issues that might remain as unfinished business.

The task part of termination has to do with reassessment and measurement about the effectiveness of the solution the group generated. A structure must be developed that enables the group to determine if it was successful.

Typical occurrences from this stage are romanticizing the positive memories of the group using selective recall and a feeling of omnipotence about one's self and the team. Other characteristics may include an unwillingness to let go and say good-bye, promises to keep in touch that one knows they can not keep, review of one's self-worth and reflection on the experience and what was learned. A general feeling of sadness may descend knowing that one may never pass this way again. This may lead to anxiety about an uncertain future.

The groups are given the assignment of designing a feedback system for their group. (See appendix) The purpose of this exercise is to enable the students to: (1) develop the skill of designing an evaluation system, (2) experience the feelings

associated with giving and getting feedback, (3) receive information about how others experience their behavior, (4) compare their own perceptions with the feedback, (5) assessing the value of their experience, (6) say good-bye.

Instructions and suggestions are given about the need to incorporate honest feelings, to generate ideas for future personal growth, and to be in written form so the member can review at a later date. The opportunity to discuss the feedback with the giver, for clarification, should be provided. It is through feedback that we learn to "see ourselves as others see us" (Hanson, 1975).

Typically the group makes a rating system incorporating many of the issues discussed during the semester. Sometimes the feedback is in the form of an open letter, while other times it is a formal ranking system.

Prior to distributing the feedback and holding discussions members are asked to review each evaluation and circle the sentences or ratings that they can own about themselves. In this way individual members get a glimpse of the powerful force of projection and how it influences the feedback process.

That's all folks... the end

Session 15 Continuing with the theme of adjourning, exit interviews are conducted by the instructor. With the course criteria completed, presentations given and comprehensive papers submitted, the students were asked, in the previous week (Session 14), to reflect and come prepared to talk about the feedback received from group members, their role in the group, feelings about other group members, unresolved feelings, any issues that they might need help in clarifying, and thoughts about the class. The purpose of the exit interview is to help the student get closure on the issues of personal growth, behavior and leadership. It is a scheduled 15 minute appointment conducted one on one in the privacy of the instructor's office. The session is devoted to helping the student clarify and integrate their personal learning experience.

Problems and Recommendations

There are a few inherent problems with teaching a team-management leadership skills course live versus canned. The first problem involves the instructor and his / her ability to role model a facilitative helping leadership style. The instructor must fully grasp and fit the part or his / her classroom behavior will be shallow and transparent, although occasional slips are probably healthy and actually add to their credibility because it demonstrates to the class it is okay to make mistakes (Bigelow, 1983). The class structure may also have a few problems such as: (1) the disorientation of the students who do not understand the

model, (2) incompatibility with student's passive learning style, (3) lack of student experience in dealing with groups, (4) inability to work with others, shyness, etc. (5) a preference for working alone and (6) dysfunctional group members (Mezoff, 1978).

It is the position of the author that the benefits and practicality of the course outweigh the above problems. Rather than have students simply develop lower level skills of knowing and understanding theory through reading and testing, this course focuses on developing the higher level skills of analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating and conceptualizing (Bloom, 1976) one's own team leadership style. The work required to break down, put back together, judge and form new ideas about one's self and his / her team is enormous. The course is fun, interesting and educational for students and instructors alike.

Conclusion

The reasons this method is successful in developing teams and individuals, according to Yalom (1985) in his discussion of therapy groups, is that certain therapeutic factors develop from the complex process of group dynamics. The interplay of various human experiences, emotions, and communications creates a healing spirit that leads to individual and group success. These therapeutic factors for cohesiveness and success are indigenous not only to therapy groups but common to all groups. Yalom identifies these as instillation of hope, universality, altruism,

identification, and self-understanding. Instillation of hope is faith in the idea that this group will develop and obtain its goal which becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that guides the group. Universality is the realization that despite individual differences in the group, members are more alike and have more in common than they are different, which helps to bond the group. Altruism means that members really are caring and giving and willing to work together to achieve their goal. Identification means individuals adopt the norms, roles and communication of the group thereby becoming bonafide members. Self-understanding means discovering oneself via the interaction and feedback from the group which enables the individual to have greater knowledge of his/her strengths and weaknesses.

These therapeutic factors lead to group cohesiveness and trust which are the keystone of group development and ultimate success. These factors help to overcome the struggles of group life and the natural differences that people from different cultures, races, religions, and backgrounds bring to the group. Understanding and acceptance of these factors are predicated on members collaborating on developing a common goal and being able to freely exchange ideas in their communications. They must authorize themselves to be genuine in their disclosure of feelings and emotions and be able to recognize and accept individual differences. Members should be able to freely choose roles that best suit their ability.

Appendix

Group Presentations

Each group is assigned a 60 minute presentation based on a model of leadership, team-management, interpersonal skills, group dynamics and communication skills. It is scheduled for a full hour so that the group is forced to develop and present it as an entire team. One or two students can not carry the day. The degree to which a group presents a good presentation is directly correlated to the degree of the group's development.

The students are asked to develop their model by integrating their individual and group experiences shared throughout the course. The presentation may be in any form but should link the material in a meaningful way. A good presentation will be a demonstration of the development of the group. A group that has matured will be able to tap their resources and generate synergy to make the presentation interesting and informative. A good presentation will require thought, leadership, trust, delegation, coordination and presentation skills. Presentations should contain and will be judged on: creativity, originality, lessons taught, class involvement, group involvement, clear communication, and relevant interest. Students are encouraged to be creative, original, have fun and use the opportunity to utilize their leadership skills in an effort to grow and learn.

Journals

Students are asked to keep a dated journal of their team experiences throughout the semester. The journal should contain observations about themselves, their team and the class. Integration of their data to established theories helps the student to gain the knowledge necessary to analyze their own behavior and the behavior of their group. Suggested entries include the date, class topic, my feelings during class, what I learned, what I liked, what I disliked, why I feel this way, and integration of theory to my observations.

The objectives of student journal writing is: (1) to improve the confidence of students as communicators, (2) to help students clarify goals, (3) to help the student understand application of course content to situations in their lives, (4) to help students become more creative problem solvers, (5) to motivate students to seek further help with particular problems, and (6) to improve performance. In essence the goal of journal writing is to teach students a method of learning theories of organizational behavior through conscious analysis of their own experiences (Allan and Enz, 1987).

Evaluation of the journal is based on two announced spot checks during the semester. Emphasis is placed on helping the student to spot patterns, focus on certain important issues, apply relevant theories, encourage deeper explanations, promote

creative analysis, and to direct the writing toward accomplishing course goals. Journals are graded as +, +/-, - , with the instructor putting much effort into writing questions, and providing analysis, thoughts and observations both in the margins and at the end of the journal to provide the student with individual feedback. Students are encouraged to make appointments with the instructor to further discuss their journals in person. Journals also serve as the data for writing the semester ending comprehensive paper.

Case study

Students are assigned a three to five page case study midway through the semester that focuses on a pertinent topic relating to group development. A theme might be authority and conflict or trust and responsibility. Typically the assignment is about a real business case and the student is asked to explain the results of the case by integrating theory. Also the student is asked to apply the case to their own group so they can see the connection between what happens in industry and in their own group. (Grade on an A-F scale)

Comprehensive Paper

The assignment consists of a individual paper, seven to ten pages, relating the student's experiences in the class, simulations and groups. The paper is an opportunity to develop a team-management leadership style that is correct for the

individual. They are asked to delineate and discuss why certain theories, regarding such topics as personal growth, leadership, group dynamics, communication, interpersonal skills, and management skills, are important to them.

Although I expect the papers to be somewhat abstract I do require that they support their claims with examples and evidence from the class, utilizing their journals. I ask them to limit their paper to two or three themes. I suggest they explore themes like my covert / overt role, my hidden agenda, my learning edge, my feelings for members in my group, or how I communicate. Integration of theory to what is personally important helps the student gain the knowledge necessary to analyze work situations and be an effective team leader. This is an opportunity for the students to crystalize their ideas about team leadership and to develop a work and life philosophy. It also serves to help the student analyze and synthesize the experience. (Graded on A-F scale, with emphasis on the willingness of the student to explore their behavior and leadership style rather than on stylistic merit).

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